



Fighting Cock #3

Date

1964

Primary Maker

Walter Williams

Medium

Color woodcut

Description

Walter Williams often depicted Black children in fields or in nature, against vibrantly colored skies and with animals or flowers.

Fighting Cock #3 is a case in point. Artist and scholar David Driskell described Williams's use of "nature as metaphor: the birds in flight ... symbolize the freedom that African Americans desired

to have to move about freely, undisturbed." While the print's title implies a struggle ahead, the expressions of the boy and the fowl seem dynamic and even optimistic, while many birds wheel in the sky above. Born in Brooklyn, New York, Williams experienced a fraught and distressing childhood. His mother, who had encouraged his artistic passions, died of pneumonia when he was five years old, leaving the artist with his strict father and stepmother. Later, he was drafted into the army where he served in France burying soldiers. Upon his return to the US, Williams used the GI Bill to attend the Brooklyn Museum Art School where he studied under artists Ben Shahn (1898–1969) and Reuben Tam (1916–1991). Many of Williams's artworks reflect the struggles of his youth and the freedom he longed for as a child. He said, "All my life I have been painting one picture. It is one that reflects my own image and the inner thoughts of my mind. I feel the naivete of a child when I paint yet I have the passions of the father that I am. I am an artist who is full of love for the world and all the images it holds."

Dimensions

Composition: 20 × 24 7/8 in. (50.8 × 63.2 cm) Sheet: 24 7/16 × 29 in. (62.1 × 73.7 cm) Frame: 30 × 40 in. (76.2 × 101.6 cm)